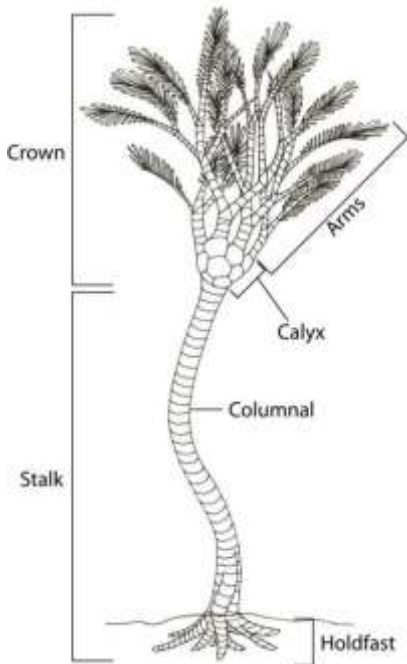


Crinoids (Ordovician – Recent) Phylum Echinodermata; Class Crinoidea

Crinoids are a group of marine invertebrates which includes starfish and sea urchins. The body shape of the animal is organized in patterns of five. Crinoids may have as few as five arms, but they usually have arms in multiples of five. Crinoids resemble plants and are sometimes called “sea lilies” (see diagram below). Most of today’s living forms are stemless and live in clear shallow water down to about 200 m (sublittoral zone), although some are attached by a stem and live in quiet deep water in the upper bathyal zone. All crinoids are filter feeders. Fossil crinoids were attached to the bottom and lived in shallow marine water. Crinoids are most common in Paleozoic rocks worldwide and in Arkansas are abundant in Late Ordovician and Mississippian age rocks. It is unusual to find a complete crinoid fossil; however, pieces of the stalk (commonly called stem or column) are abundantly preserved in the rocks in Arkansas.



The crinoid animal.
Illustration by Sherrie Shepherd.



Crinoid stem from the Mississippian
Pitkin Formation in north Arkansas.



Crinoid crown (calyx) with stem and other stem fragments, north Arkansas.



Crinoid fossils in the Pitkin Limestone, north Arkansas.

*Top drawing from *Fossils of Arkansas*, Tom Freeman.